

**Selective Minutes**  
**Virginia Council on Human Rights**  
**Saturday, June 7, 2003**  
**State Capitol, House Room II**  
**Richmond, Virginia**

**Council Members Present:** Max Guggenheimer, Jr., Chairman; William Barnes; Daniel Jenkins; Thomas Knox; and Christopher Peace.

**Staff Present:** Dietra Y. Trent, Director and Timothy L. Wilson, Administration/Operations Manager.

**Guest Present:** The Honorable Cheryl Bailey, Deputy Secretary of Administration and Ondray T. Harris, Assistant Attorney General.

**I. Introductions and Welcome**

The Chairman called the meeting to order without a quorum at 9:50 a.m. The Chairman commented that this would be the last meeting of five Council members and stated that he would like to respond to the remarks to be extended by Deputy Secretary Bailey.

**II. Director's Report**

**The Honorable Cheryl Bailey, Deputy Secretary of Administration**

The Director thanked all persons in attendance and asked their pardon for having rescheduled the meeting to today's date. She then introduced Deputy Secretary Bailey to the Council members. The Deputy Secretary thanked the Council members for their dedication to the mission and activities of the agency. The agency has shown considerable stability in surviving unprecedented challenges within the Commonwealth and the effects of the largest budget shortfall experienced in our state's revenue. The Director and staff are commended for maintaining its stability and independence for an agency this size. There are larger agencies within the Secretariat that are merging with other agencies, yet this agency is still surviving separate and on its own. The retiring members of the Council ought to be a resource for the agency, aiding in continuing its mission.

The Deputy Secretary then presented certificates of service to the Chairman, Max Guggenheimer for eight (8) years of service, Member William Barnes for four (4) years and Member Daniel Jenkins for eight (8) years.

## **Chairman's Response**

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Secretary for her attendance, remarks, and presentations. He also thanked the Warner administration for their cooperation and assistance with the agency. He then shared a copy of a letter he forwarded to the Governor dated April 24, 2003. The letter consisted of the following: (1) his gratitude for having been given the opportunity to serve as a Council member and as the Chairman; (2) reminded the Governor that when filling the five vacancies on the Council, those persons should possess high standards to uphold the mission of the agency; (3) request that the Office of the Secretary of Administration work closer with agency; and (4) the agency has potential to do better works especially with the leadership of the current director. He had attained a seat on the Council when he expressed an interest in human rights. One of the many accomplishments of the agency that he was glad to have supported were the public forums. He also commented that the Commonwealth has done a lot in the cause for human rights and that it still had a lot to accomplish. Virginia needs this Council and the agency should find ways to do things without money. The Chairman then asked Members Jenkins and Barnes to give their responses.

Member Jenkins commented that when the Council hosted the public forums, it made a tremendous impact on the citizens of the Commonwealth as a platform to the Governor.

Member Barnes added that the Council needs to have more of its meeting outside of Richmond to help citizens come and express their concerns more frequently. The agency needs better publicity and the better the publicity, the more of its mission will the Council accomplish.

The Director expressed that losing these three (3) men will be a tremendous loss for this agency, especially considering their commitment.

Deputy Secretary Bailey thanked the three retiring members for their responses and reminded them to continue to avail themselves as a resource for the agency.

Member Peace commented that the new chairman should work closely with the Director as did Mr. Guggenheimer.

The Deputy Secretary agreed and encouraged the agency and its Council members to try partnering with other state agencies and related agencies.

## **Budget**

The Director gave an overview of the original budget proposal involving the agency as introduced to the General Assembly. She then went over the changes to that proposal after the General Assembly concluded. The results included that agency maintained its independence and it will lose two (2) employees. Also, the agency will relocate the Office of the Attorney General where the rent will be supplemented. The estimated budget shortfall for the agency went from approximately \$343,000.00 to about \$250,000.00. Looking ahead into the 2004 budget, the agency will not be able to depend on its federal income because with loss in staff it may be unable to fulfill its contract. A discussion was held involving the agency's income that is primarily based upon its investigations. A few ideas were mentioned on how to lessen the load of investigations, yet none could be acted upon without monetary support that the agency lacks at this time.

## **Board Vacancies**

The Director is working closely with the Secretary of the Commonwealth regarding the new Council appointees. The Director believes that there are some good candidates coming aboard with civil rights and equal employment opportunity training.

Member Jenkins asked if there was a blend of diversity amongst the potential appointees. The Director responded that she has been advised that the make-up of the appointees displays diversity and professionalism geared for the mission of the agency.

## **Accomplishments**

In spite of the current budget shortfall, the Director reminded the Council members of the accomplishments that have been made since last year that included: (1) implementation of the strategic plan; (2) increase in mediation program; (3) CDS system was installed to link directly with the EEOC regarding case profiles; (4) re-instituted public forums; (5) set goals to complete newly assigned cases within a 6 – 9 month time frame; and (6) recruited personnel assistance through the Senior Employment Program of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and three interns for the summer. She then directed the Council members attention to the current and future obstacles of the agency that involve: (1) operational costs; (2) efficiency; and (3) staff cuts.

## **Staff**

The Director gave an overview of the performances of Tim Wilson, Administration/Operations Manager and Ben Jones, Investigator. She shared how each had displayed extraordinary professionalism and possessed profound dedication to the agency and its mission. Their last day will Monday, June 9, 2003.

Member Barnes brought to the Director's attention, with this decrease in staff would contracting the investigations be effective alternative. The Director responded that she may have to inquire into the specifics of that suggestion along with the legal ramifications involving the state code.

### **III. Chairman's Remarks**

The Chairman commented on Member Peace statement regarding teamwork within the Council members and with the Director. He encouraged Members Peace and Knox to uphold the spirit of unity and teamwork with the veteran Council members and new appointees. He then expressed his encouragement and sincerity to Tim Wilson and Ben Jones on their lay off from the agency. He and other Council members expressed their concern for Tim Wilson and offered themselves as references as he may need to aid in his professional career. In her absence, he also thanked Sandra Norman for her spirit of cohesiveness to keep things together and flowing smoothly amongst the Council members and the agency. He again thanked the Director and the Council for having shared this opportunity with them.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Submitted by,

Max Guggenheimer, Jr.  
Chairman

Timothy Wilson  
Recorder